

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : U - The Under Secretary

DATE: May 8, 1960

Through: S/S *BR*

FROM : P - James Greenfield *JLC*

SUBJECT: ABC Television Interview: Fidel Castro and Lisa Howard

Here's the ABC transcript. John is worried lest the Vice President indicate that it was somehow unpatriotic for ABC to have done this interview. I have given him my private assurances that no such slighting reference would be made by the Vice President in his speech.

A brubeck-Bundy memo attaching comments on the transcript is also attached.

JLGreenfield:ba
att: as indicated

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED by *JLC*

DATE *2/16/53*

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LISA HOWARD INTERVIEW OF FIDEL CASTRO

ABC TELEVISION

HOWARD: Mr. Castro, were the missiles placed in Cuba because Khrushchev wanted them here or because you asked for them?

In other words, in this situation where did the initiative lie?

CASTRO: Tell her that I feel that this isn't the right moment to make a detailed discussion of those historic events.

However, she must also understand that I am extremely interested that those details become known; but tell her the following:

After a few days the Soviet and Cuban governments realized that we had to take certain measures because of the imminence of an invasion of the country that we felt was going to be carried out. And these measures had to be borne of the idea that we had to persuade the aggressors that an invasion of Cuba would lead to World War.

And on the strength of that we then took the de facto measures -- we didn't just waste time with words -- to stop the possibility of aggression. From that point of view you can say that it was simultaneous action on the part of both governments.

HOWARD: Doctor Castro, looking back on the October crises with hindsight, did you think it was wise to have permitted the missiles to be placed on Cuban soil in the first place?

CASTRO: Tell her that looking backwards and placing ourselves in the same circumstances, I understand that it was correct.

HOWARD: Why?

CASTRO: I had already told you earlier that we started from the need to take measures that would force the United States to desist from invading Cuba.

The fact that aggression was being prepared was borne out later by no less than the Chairman of the counter-revolutionary council himself, and surely that would be the best proof.

HOWARD: What is the purpose of the Soviet troops that still remain on Cuban soil? Do you really feel that this large military presence is necessary for the defense of the island?

CASTRO: Tell them that if they call troops those technicians that are still in Cuba at the moment, that's a different thing.

Tell her that these experts and technicians are here in our interest. We are having our personnel trained by them.

I consider that in the present circumstances, and until we are truly and sincerely assured of a policy of peace towards us, we will need those technicians to train our personnel.

HOWARD: Are you telling me, Doctor Castro, that there are no Soviet troops and armaments on Cuban soil at the moment?

CASTRO: You call them Soviet troops; we call them technicians.

And they are training our troops. They are training our troops. They are the instructors of our troops.

HOWARD: And they are not Soviet troops themselves?

CASTRO: They are Soviet technicians. I think that if we are attacked those technicians will fight with us against any aggressor.

HOWARD: No member of the Communist bloc can ignore the ever-widening ideological schism between Red China and Soviet Russia, with

Mao Tse Tung's emphasis on war as a useful instrument of national policy, and Mr. Khrushchev's conviction that the world must develop along lines of peaceful coexistence.

As between these two schools of thought where do you stand, sir?

CASTRO: It is true that there are some differences between points of view of the Soviet leaders and the Chinese leaders.

I do not believe that those differences are any deeper than those that exist, for example, between DeGaulle and Kennedy. I believe that there is no insoluble or absolute contradiction between the Soviet Union and Peoples Republic of China. Nor do I believe, nor would I accept, that the policy of China be a policy of war as a means of national instruments.

Since we believe that, our position is to fight for the strengthening of, and the improvement of, relations between these two great countries of the Socialist camp.

That is our position.

ROGERS: It has often been reported that your alliance with the Communists inside Cuba is a precarious one. And in January of 1962 you denounced the Cuban Communists for shunting aside the Fidelistas and taking all the top posts themselves.

What is the situation now today in Cuba between the Fidelistas and the old line Communists?

CASTRO: Tell her that as the revolution advances the union of all the revolutionaries becomes greater and stronger.

The criticisms that we leveled against the sectorisms that existed were intended to overcome and correct certain mistakes that divided us.

Once we've overcome those mistakes the unity among all

revolutionaries is today greater than ever before.

I have heard in the United States much has been made of the division between the old and the young communists. I can tell you that there is only a theory, not only a theory, it's an idea. It is not true. If anybody in the United States is trying to solve our problem by fostering this division it is a mistake to do so. And you people of the United States think that they would understand my English. If not, yes.

HOLLARD: In an interview in Le Monde, you criticized the leaders of the Soviet satellite countries because of their total subservience to Moscow. Are you able to be any more independent when you are almost utterly dependent on Moscow for your economic survival?

C. STRO: Tell her that I don't know whether she knows that when those interviews were published in Le Monde I made a clarification regarding the fact that I had granted no interview to the reporter of Le Monde.

There was an informal conversation at the home of the Director of The Revolution, The Revolution, the newspaper, and we dealt with many subjects.

But many of the subjects were discussed without translators. But the reporter did not know Spanish too well, and many of the subjects we talked about appeared in a very different way in the newspaper from the way we had spoken about them. That led to the misunderstanding.

HOLLARD: Then I shall rephrase my question.

C. STRO: And I rejected the interview as such.

HOWARD: I say, I will rephrase my question, that question, and ask you do you feel that Cuba has any chance of being independent of Moscow when you are almost totally dependent on Moscow for your economic survival?

C. STRO: Tell her that as far as we are concerned the Soviet Union never put political conditions to her economic assistance.

It is true that we received, or that the assistance we received is economic and comes primarily from the Soviet Union, and we are extremely grateful for that assistance.

But that assistance has never been sent us with any conditions.

Yet, you can tell her that in the United States they have certain slogans and cliches, certain ideas that they take almost as though they were axioms or truisms.

But I believe that what is taught in the United States and the way things are analyzed there will finally lead them to understand exactly how Cuba is acting. We are using complete self-determination.

HOWARD: Cuba now finds itself isolated in this hemisphere. It is no longer on speaking terms with most Latin American countries, the victims of an economic blockade, and with all of your support coming from six or seven thousand miles away can you, Doctor Castro, possibly continue to exist as a viable economy in this isolated atmosphere?

C. STRO: It is true, it is entirely true. We are the victims of a great economic blockade. We are the victims of a program of isolationism on the part of a powerful nation, but anyway, although with certain difficulties we have still managed to go ahead, and we are sure that we will progress.

HOWARD: Doctor Castro, since you assumed power nearly 300,000 people have fled the island, and the recent emigrants have been doctors, lawyers, teachers, as well as workers. How do you account for this exodus, and the exodus that is still continuing?

CASTRO: Tell her that her figures are somewhat exaggerated. Not that many have left the island.

Nor is it true that they're were all rich and all poor people who left. The majority of them were the higher and the middle-classes that left the island. And people who occupied high posts.

But, further, from Cuba to the United States there was always a great emigration. And after the revolution, there was no limit. That before the revolution there was a limit./ There was no quota set to the Cuban emigration to the United States.

I am convinced if the doors of other Latin American countries were to be thrown open for free emigration to the United States surely more people would leave these countries for the United States than today leave Cuba for the United States.

I'll give you an example. Puerto Rico. The United States has said that there is a good standard of living, a good social and political system, and yet more than one million Puerto Ricans have gone to the United States of America.

And if we're going to judge the system by the number of persons leaving, then the system in Puerto Rico is the worst of the lot of them.

HOWARD: But perhaps I should have phrased it differently. Many of the most recent emigrants -- and I saw many of them in Miami -- were not people of money; many of them had originally been with the revolutionaries. Would you explain that emigration?

CASTRO: Well, because there are some people who want to emigrate to the United States, seeking a better standard of living. And also, there are cases of persons, because of disagreement with the revolution, leave the island and go to foreign parts.

But in many cases that is a mere pretext. The political pretext is adduced. And the reason is an economic reason.

Now, I can assure you that those who have left, or rather the earlier emigration was purely of the poor. This is part of the revolution. And the emigration after the revolution is, on the whole, of the higher classes.

When the revolution occurred in the United States, don't forget, many Americans left the United States and went to Canada. They did not want the American way of life, nor the independence of the United States.

HQWARD: Dr. Castro, the United States and other nations of the OAS are extremely concerned over the exporting of your revolution to other nations in the hemisphere, the training of subversive agents, the sending of subversive materiel throughout the hemisphere, and in fact the San Jose (?) meetings are to stop the flow of men, propaganda and arms to other nations of the hemisphere from Cuba.

Why do you feel that at this early and and difficult stage of your own development that it is necessary to export your revolution to other nations throughtout Latin America?

CASTRO: I thought that those countries were more concerned with exporting counterrevolution to Cuba.

Tell her that there is no proof that we have sent weapons or arms to other countries of Latin America to start revolutions.

On the other hand, we have thousands of troops not their weapons sent by the United States and other countries to Cuba intended to raise counterrevolution here in Cuba. That is the truth.

Why do you always try to look at things from a different angle? What do we think? That revolutions cannot be exported is what we think. That revolutions can occur or they do not occur. If conditions of an objective nature are conducive to the revolution then the revolution will take place in the country.

Furthermore, there has to be an adequate degree of political awareness in the people in order to carry out such a revolution. But you cannot export that. Nor can you export counterrevolution.

Now I wonder if a country feels that it has the right to export counterrevolution what right has that country to deny to other countries equal rights to export revolution?

HOWARD: Are you exporting counterrevolution? The San Jose meeting pledged to stop the flow of arms, men and some materiel from Cuba that would be subversive to other nations.

Now why should such a pledge be taken? Are you exporting revolution or not?

CASTRO: We cannot be exporting something that is non-exportable.

HOWARD: So your answer is that you are not training men and you are not sending arms and materiel to other countries to create revolution?

C. STRO: There is one thing. She spoke of propaganda. That's one thing. We have radio stations. We have speeches of the revolutionary leaders and the information from Cuba are made known all over the world.

Something similar occurs with the radio stations of Florida and other parts where programs are broadcast and they submit and make known the point of view of the United States.

But when all is said and done we do not possess the resources of the United States government, nor do we have the training centers of the United States in order to compete with the United States in training of Latin Americans.

HOWARD: But as a dedicated Marxist-Leninist don't you think it's important and necessary to export your revolution? Isn't that part of the philosophy?

C. STRO: What do you mean? What I think is that the idea has to be defended. The idea itself is what counts and what you do with it.

Now your ideas and the ideas of the United States, your ideas of freedom, didn't many of them come from Europe?

HOWARD: There's a body of liberal opinion in the United States which contends that you turned to Soviet Russia because you had no alternative, because by 1960 the United States had closed its doors to you. And they believe that if the United States could have accepted the expropriation with a pledge by you of course for compensation, you would have remained with the West, or at least neutral.

Are they correct? Or was your revolution inevitably going to turn in this radical direction?

CASTRO: Tell her that it is true that when they suspended the sugar quota of Cuba, when they closed the doors to trade between Cuba and the United States, Cuba had no other alternative from the economic standpoint than to tighten its economic relations with the Soviet Union.

She wants to know what would have happened if those measures hadn't been taken, if the United States had accepted the expropriation. Well, I don't believe that you can say such a thing categorically.

We cannot know exactly how events would have followed such a stand. But I do believe that relations would have been very different from what they are now and what they had been.

She asks whether our revolution would have been a radical revolution. And I believe it would have been. It was going to be a radical revolution. But naturally the hostility of the United States contributed to making our revolution more radical.

HQMLRD: Then you're saying that in the very beginning you did not intend to break off relations with the United States. Do you, in fact, ever intend to issue compensation for expropriated lands and businesses?

CASTRO: To whom?

HOWARD: To the United States companies.

CASTRO: To the United States companies? Well, we have compensated to many Cubans. We have compensated them and we have met the reality of the American interests.

Now, do they want to speak to us about it? If they do and if they wish to talk of compensation or indemnity, or if they want to name a commission for Cuba and the United States then we shall think about it.

HOWARD: This is a question you are willing to discuss?

CASTRO: Yes.

HOWARD: Before your revolution succeeded, Dr. Castro, you often spoke of that revolution and the aims of the revolution in terms of liberty and freedom. You pledged elections within eighteen months, and you pledged to uphold the rights of opposition parties during the transitional stage. But there have been no free elections and there are no opposition parties.

Why, Mr. Prime Minister, did you create a revolution that was so completely different than the one you promised?

CASTRO: Tell her that we made a revolution that has meant freedom for the exploited peoples who had no schools, no hospitals, that had no employment or jobs, that had no land; and not a revolution of freedom for the exploiters and the priveleged.

We promised agrarian reforms. We have carried it out. We promised an urban reform, and we have put through our promises. We promised to wipe out illiteracy, and we have fulfilled that promise.

HOWARD: What about free elections? What about opposition parties? Because that was a part of your pledge too.

CASTRO: In your point of view that is the only way to freedom. We are

trying to---

HOWARD: I'm quoting you. Those were your words in the Sierra Maestra where you said there would be elections in eighteen months, opposition parties during the period of your state. I'm repeating your words, not mine.

CASTRO: But the situation has changed. The situation changed because since the beginning we have been under conditions of war against us. Not a normal situation.

And the situation of a revolution, if you analyze the history of all the revolutions -- French revolution, the Soviet revolution -- all the revolutions in the history, you can see that the situation changed very much. And new conditions appeared.

In Cuba while we were doing the revolution new situation appeared. I think we have walked long distance, long distance in the revolution, and your ideas about freedom, are not the only ideas that exist.

HOWARD: Do you intend to have free elections and an opposition party and a free press?

CASTRO: Not in the bourgeois concept of elections. We have a revolutionary concept. And I believe that for those caught up in the democratic institutions they can't really live in the heart of exploitation.

Democracy cannot exist surrounded by exploitation. Ignorance and want can. You have first to liquidate the other in order to allow true conditions of freedom to exist.

We don't have the same blueprint as you do.

HOWARD: Basically I was wondering did it inevitably have to go in the direction with the communist bloc? If the situation had been different at a particular point might you have not gone -- might you have not gone with

Soviet Russia?

CASTRO: Well, I think that the radicalization takes us to seek the friendship of the Soviet Union. It was our own necessity that led us to it. And it forced us to improve our relations with the Soviet Union.

Anyway, we believed and we felt that our country should enjoy relations with all countries, both political, diplomatic and trade relations.

The attitude of the United States toward us was that we can^{only} enjoy a single type of relation; and we fundamentally disagreed with it.

HOWARD: There has been a great deal of conjecture regarding when you became a communist.

In 1960, as late as 1960 you were still saying that you were not a communist and that you felt that communism violated basic freedoms.

Then on December 2nd of 1961 you declared that you were a Marxist - Leninist. Why and when did you change your mind about communism?

CASTRO: Tell her that the ideas of Marx have had a great influence all over the world, including among men, statesmen and politicians that don't call themselves communists nor Marxists.

Many of the ideas have been accepted. I received the first picture of Marx ---

HOWARD: No, sir. My question was why Dr. Castro changed his mind. Why he changed his mind about communism?

CASTRO: Tell her that from the time when I was a student I began to read the textbooks of Marx and could see a real interest in his ideas; although at the time I was not as yet a communist.

I did have growing convictions of the advantages of the socialist system as against the capitalist system. And in my mind there was a process of development of the idea. And was most conscious it was the revolution itself,

the experiences we gathered during the revolution, and especially that that we learned from the United States of America. How a capitalist and powerful country seeks a weak and underdeveloped country. And how a socialist country, on the other hand, behaved toward us.

HOWARD: Dr. Castro, do you feel there is any basis for a return to normal relations with the United States and Cuba with you as Prime Minister? And do you desire such a rapprochement?

CASTRO: I think it is possible the United States government wish it. In that case we would be agreed to seek and to find the basis.

HOWARD: What conditions?

CASTRO: It is not only our matter. It is the fine points.

For example, the conditions are to be discussed. But I have not studied the possibility, but I think that as a basis the point that Cuba established when the crisis was clear.

But I think that something has been advanced. The United States has given some steps in the way of peace, and I have looked at the steps with good eyes.

HOWARD: Do you think right now with the exchange of your prisoners and our prisoners who were down here in Cuba that we've reached a stage of agreement, of a rapprochement?

CASTRO: It is possible if we can use it, if the United States wants it, it is the beginning of a better relation. It is a way of diminishing tension.

Such as the other steps the United States has given regarding the piracy and the attacks against Cuba are also steps.

I believe that they are wise and intelligent steps because the enemies of ~~Castro~~ ^{Kennedy} want to corner him and they want to throw him into a business of

war in the case of Cuba.

HOWARD: If the United States is willing to end the blockade in exchange for a withdrawal of all Soviet troops, or whatever you call them. technicians, and armaments from Cuban soil, and an end to the exporting of your revolution from here to other nations of the hemisphere would you be willing to agree to these two things?

CASTRO: Tell her that I have already answered her regarding the export of the revolution.

I also spoke of the question of the technicians. I believe in all these problems, these problems that refer to the technicians, are of interest to us, to the Soviet Union and to the United States of America. And they can be discussed. We could discuss it among the three of us.

HOWARD: Are you anxious to sit down and talk to Kennedy?

CASTRO: I don't think it is good. The United States wants to discuss it with the Soviet Union without us. To discuss without us, with the Soviet Union without Cuba, is wrong. The best thing is that we discuss the matter among the three of us.

HOWARD: Then you would like to sit down and talk to President Kennedy?

CASTRO: The answer is I do not know one thing about that what President Kennedy thinks.

HOWARD: In other words, you must know -- Mr. Prime Minister, do you think that some day in the future it might be possible for you to steer a neutral course, to become the Tito of the Caribbean?

CASTRO: Our idea is not neutralism. But when there is peace among all peoples, when there are no blocs, then there will be no neutralism, and that is our ideal.

I do not believe in turning to any Tit of the Caribbean.

HOWARD: Mr. Prime Minister, if you could live over again the last five years would you do things differently?

CASTRO: I think we have now more experience. It is possible that we could do better, But I think with the same intentions.

Somebody asked Mr. Benjamin Franklin something like that. He said he would live again how he had lived; and that is my answer.

HOWARD: Thank you very much. Just very quickly, what might you do differently?

CASTRO: Very quickly it's not possible to answer.

HOWARD: Thank you, sir.

CASTRO: I hope you'll be satisfied.

No, very rapidly you can't discuss these things.
